DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 182 354 UD 019 641

TITLE Housing Need Among Ethnic Minorities: Comments on the Consultative Document on Housing Policy Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales.
INSTITUTION Commission for Racial Equality, London (England).
PUB DATE Dec 77
NOTE 14p.; Not available in paper copy due to small, light print

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Black Housing; Building Improvement; Government Role; *Housing Deficiencies; Housing Discrimination; *Housing Needs; *Housing Opportunities; Housing Patterns; Local Government; *Local Housing Authorities; Low Rent Housing; *Minority Groups; Public Housing
IDENTIFIERS *Great Britain; Home Ownership

ABSTRACT

The extent of housing need among ethnic minorities in Great Britain is examined in terms of their concentration in areas of poor housing, local government policies on allocation of housing to minorities, proportions of shared dwellings, and lack of housing amenities. Local government renting policies are discussed, showing the need to change housing allocation policies which discriminate against minorities. Special housing needs of minorities are described in categories of low income households, homelessness, one parent families, elderly people, and refugees. Strategies for local governments to improve housing are recommended. The problems of home ownership for minorities are discussed in terms of lending policies of building societies, the need for cooperation between local authorities and building societies, policies for renovation of old housing, and estate agents and house purchase arrangements. The position of minorities in the private rental sector and in housing associations is outlined. The need for reallocation of minorities to New Towns is discussed. Also stressed is the need for communication with minorities on the options open to them. (MC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

COMMISSION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

Housing need among Ethnic Minorities

ED182354

COMMENTS on the Consultative Document on Housing Policy presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Lionel Morrison
Commission for Racial Equality
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD019641

A memorandum from the Commission for Racial Equality, December 1977

THE COMMISSION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

The Commission for Racial Equality was set up by the Race Relations Act 1976 with the duties of working towards the elimination of discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between different racial groups generally.

The Commission has broad powers to undertake investigations for any purpose connected with its duties. Where it finds discrimination, it may issue a non-discrimination notice requiring this to cease. It may bring proceedings against persistent discriminators and in cases concerning discriminatory advertisements and instructions, aid or pressure to discriminate. It undertakes advisory and educational work, and assists community relations councils, ethnic minority organisations, and other organisations in the promotion of equality of opportunity and good race relations.

Although the Commission is not obliged to investigate individual complaints, it has discretion to advise and assist complainants where there are special reasons for doing so.

Chairman

Mr David Lane

Deputy Chairmen

Mr Clifton Robinson (Full-time)
Mr Bashir Maan (Part-time)
Mr Pranlal Sheth (Part-time)

Members

Mrs Juliet Cheetham
Mr W H Keys
Mr Courtney Laws
Mr R J Ramsay
Mr Malcolm Campbell Lee
Mr Frank Cummins
Mrs Anowara Jahan
Mr William Morris
Miss Gwenneth M Rickus
Mr Alan Wilson

Chief Executive

Mr Peter Tucker

Headquarters

Elliot House
10/12 Allington Street
London SW1E 5EH
Tel: 01-828 7022

Birmingham

Daimler House
33 Paradise Circus Queensway
Birmingham B1 2BJ
Tel: 021 643 8281
021 643 0690
021 643 7525/6

Manchester

Third Floor
Scottish Life House
Bridge Street
Manchester M3 3BG
Tel: 061 832 3740
061 834 1745

Nottingham

Birkbeck House
Trinity Square
Nottingham NG1 4AX
Tel: 0602 44873
0602 44687

Leeds

133 The Headrow
Leeds LS1 5QX
Tel: 0532 34413/4

CONTENTS

1. Introduction 1

2. The Extent of Housing Need Among Ethnic Minorities 1

3. Local Authority Lettings 2

4. Special Housing Needs 4

5. Local Housing Strategies 5

6. Home Ownership 5

7. The Private Rented Sector 7

8. Housing Associations 7

9. New Towns 7

10. Communication With Ethnic Minorites on Housing 8

11. Summary 8

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Commission welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Government's Consultative Document on Housing Policy. As the Secretaries of State assert in their foreword, "the rising standards of the great majority contrast sharply and starkly with those of people still living in poor or unsuitable housing. There are people who still live in slums, in houses lacking basic amenities or in overcrowded conditions, there are those with special housing needs and there are those who are homeless. In addition there is the problem of whole neighbourhoods in our inner cities which are weighed down with concentrations of bad housing." The Green Paper states (para 12.55) that "it is a fact that a higher proportion of households of New Commonwealth origin live in poor housing conditions, especially as regards overcrowding and lack of exclusive amenities." For this reason we shall concentrate on those recommendations which are directed towards improving the housing standards of those in greatest need. We shall also, however, try to highlight the special difficulties experienced by ethnic minorities and we shall be arguing that in all future plans and policies in housing the implications for race relations must be taken into account.

2. THE EXTENT OF HOUSING NEED AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES

2.1. We think it is important to bear in mind the extent to which ethnic minorities are represented among those in most urgent housing need. The following illustrations are taken from the Community Relations Commission's report to the Home Secretary on urban deprivation and racial inequality in 1976.

(a) **Concentration of ethnic minorities in areas of poor housing**

70% of the ethnic minority population are concentrated in 10% of census enumeration districts and these districts contain disproportionately high numbers of households living at the statutory overcrowding level and lacking basic amenities.

(b) **Allocation to less desirable accommodation in local authority housing**

A study of council housing in Inner London Boroughs carried out by the Runnymede Trust shows that 52% of ethnic minority tenants (defined as tenants with both parents born in the New Commonwealth) live in high density pre-war council estates compared with 22% of the general council tenant population. 77% of minority tenants live in high density estates compared with 56% of the total population, and the proportion of minority tenants living on estates built since 1961 is only half that of tenants as a whole. Recent lettings surveys carried out by the GLC and Islington confirm that ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented among those allocated less desirable accommodation.

(c) **Shared dwellings and density of population**

The 1971 Census Household Composition Tables showed that 21% of households whose chief economic supporter was born in the New Commonwealth lived in shared dwellings compared with 4% of all households. The average number of persons per room in the total population was 0.59; the figure for New Commonwealth households was nearly double, 0.93. The PEP Survey of Racial Disadvantage has shown that 30% of West Indian households and 22% of Asian households live in shared dwellings, compared with 3.8% for the general population. Using a person per bedroom measure of density of occupation, the median number of persons per bedroom for whites is 1.25, for West Indians 1.66 and for Asians 1.83.

(d) **Housing amenities**

Whereas less than one household in a hundred in the total population does not enjoy exclusive use of both cooking stove and sink, 8% of New Commonwealth households are in these circumstances. 18% of the general population have to share the use of bath, hot water and inside WC, whereas 33% of West Indian, 35% of Indian and 57% of Pakistani/Bangladeshi households share these amenities.

2.2. This degree of disadvantage is not only a matter of housing concern but has wider social and political implications for race and community relations. Bad housing is obviously one of the most important factors in the general pattern of deprivation affecting minority groups. Moreover where minorities become associated with areas of bad housing they may unfairly be seen by the indigenous white population as the cause of these problems. These, we believe, are added reasons for tackling the problems of deprivation with the utmost urgency, and with particular attention to the needs of ethnic minorities.

3. LOCAL AUTHORITY LETTINGS

3.1. Local authorities now have a statutory duty under Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 which states:

"Without prejudice to their obligation to comply with any other provision of this Act, it shall be the duty of every local authority to make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their various functions are carried out with due regard to the need –

(a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and

(b) to promote equality of opportunity, and good relations, between persons of different racial groups."

The abolition of qualifications for entry to local authority waiting lists

3.2. The Commission supports the Government's proposal (para 9.21) in line with the recommendations of the Cullingworth Committee in 1969 and more recently of the Housing Services Advisory Group, to consider legislation to prohibit residential or other qualifications for entry to local authority waiting lists. We should like this proposal to include the residential requirements, such as the five year waiting rule imposed by most London Boroughs, whereby no offer of accommodation can be made until an applicant has been resident for a fixed period of time regardless of housing need. While the great majority of adults from minority communities have now been in Britain long enough to satisfy residence qualifications there is evidence to suggest that in some areas such qualifications still work to the disadvantage of the minorities. A recent examination of new registrations on Tower Hamlets' waiting list showed that 31% of those who registered in 1975 were Asian, and of these 52% were not eligible for rehousing because they lacked the residence qualification: the comparable figure for the rest of the newly registered households was 13%. It is our view that such residential requirements could be considered indirectly discriminatory under the provisions of the 1976 Race Relations Act, i.e. as constituting a requirement or condition which has a disproportionately adverse effect on a particular racial group and which may not be justifiable. The experience of the London Borough of Hammersmith after deciding to abandon the five year waiting rule in 1975 should reassure authorities who fear that such a step would have the effect of greatly increasing the number of applicants.

3.3. Similarly, the exclusion of owner occupiers from local authority housing lists must also operate to the disadvantage of members of ethnic minorities in particular, many of whom are owner occupiers living in poor conditions. In fact 76% of Asian and 50% of West Indian households are in owner occupied accommodation. In many cases these households will previously have been excluded from council lists on residence grounds and discriminated against in the private rented sector. Many of them too will be on low incomes, perhaps large loans at high rates of interest, unable to afford to install basic amenities and, by any definition, in severe housing need. We consider that the exclusion of owner occupiers from local authority housing lists, like the application of residence requirements, may be indirectly discriminatory.

Publication of allocation schemes

3.4. We also welcome the proposal (para 9.22) that local authorities should be required to publish their allocation schemes, and wish to emphasise that this should include the publication of transfer schemes. Not all authorities appear to have a clear policy on transfers and until such schemes are formulated and published, informal systems will persist, and these, like poorly defined allocation schemes, more easily permit racial discrimination along with other unfair treatment. Apart from the publication of allocation and transfer schemes, which could usefully be translated into the appropriate Asian language(s) in areas of Asian minority settlement, there is an obvious need for more information generally to be communicated, particularly to ethnic minorities. Evidence from the recent PEP reports suggests that ethnic minorities are, as we would expect, less aware of the existence of local authority housing than whites and that even where they are concentrated in poor quality council housing, they nevertheless fail to make use of the transfer system to the extent that might be expected. The publication of allocation schemes may also improve the understanding of the indigenous population who may sometimes resent the movement of people they see as newcomers moving into local authority housing. It might be helpful if more local authorities followed the example of the London Borough of Hammersmith in regularly publishing details of the number of points of applicants being rehoused in certain categories of accommodation.

Sources of disadvantage to ethnic minorities in allocation procedures

3.5. Recent research has shown that the following are the main sources of disadvantage in allocation procedures for ethnic minorities. We would obviously like to see local authorities paying particular attention to these factors in any reassessment of their allocation procedures.

(a) **Weight given to residence vis-a-vis need**

In some local authorities residence and waiting time are given the same weighting as housing need in the allocation system. This obviously works to the disadvantage of all those in housing need, but particularly the ethnic minorities who are over-represented among those in greatest housing need but who tend not to have waited so long. We would prefer to see priority assessed as a product of the degree of housing need and the duration of that housing need.

(b) **Priorities among different sources of applicant**

The priorities generally applied by local authorities are at present a source of disadvantage to ethnic minorities who are, for example, over-represented among the homeless who tend to be allocated poorer accommodation, and under-represented among transfer applicants who receive more desirable accommodation.

(c) **Shortage of large size family accommodation**

While there is a tendency for the family size of West Indians and to a more gradual extent that of Asians to conform to the average family size for the population as a whole, at present ethnic minorities have larger families on average (3.68) than whites (2.86). The shortage of larger accommodation means that they not only have to wait longer but that they are allocated to the less desirable pre-war estates which have larger units or to acquired properties with relatively poor amenities. The emphasis on smaller units in new building programmes which is presently being advocated by the Department of the Environment is likely to aggravate this problem and we would like to see more larger units included on newer estates.

(d) **Knowledge of opportunities and preference**

It is sometimes assumed that ethnic minorities are concentrated on poorer estates because these happen to be in areas where they prefer to live – close to the original centres of immigrant settlement and established minority communities. The GLC lettings survey showed however that non-whites were less likely to be allocated to areas of their choice than whites, and that 64% of non-whites did not have any friends or relatives living in the area of the estate before they moved in. The same survey found that the housing conditions of applicants prior to being rehoused were worse for non-whites than for whites and that non-white applicants were more inclined to accept their first offer than whites. This suggests that a disproportionate number of non-whites may be accepting less desirable accommodation because it is nevertheless an improvement on their existing conditions and they cannot afford to wait for a better offer. Nevertheless, in so far as preference is a factor in allocations, ethnic minorities tend to be less aware of the options open to them in terms of area, estate, and accommodation, and it is important that local authorities try to ensure that preferences are expressed on the basis of as much information as possible – possibly by laying a greater emphasis on the need for housing visitors to disseminate information, and by employing housing visitors who speak the relevant minority languages and have a knowledge of the cultural background of ethnic minorities. It is important that housing visitors do not make assumptions about the preferences of ethnic minority applicants, or indeed about the preferences of white applicants. It would, for example, be unlawful if housing officials withheld from white applicants vacancies on "black estates" on the assumption that such offers would be unacceptable to them.

Re-assessment of allocation policies and practices

3.6. We concur with the view expressed in the Green Paper (para 9.16 - 9.17) that if local authorities are to be successful in coping with the changing patterns of housing need they must reconsider their allocation policies and practices including the traditional priorities given to certain categories of applicant. It is our contention that such reviews should be a continuing process based on the maximum possible information about the existing housing stock and the way in which existing allocation schemes are meeting the needs of the community they are intended to serve.

3.7. However unless local authorities grade their housing stock, keep records of ethnic origins where there is minority settlement and ensure adequate feedback on the quality and location of their lettings, they will not be aware of such problems where they exist nor will they be in a position to reconsider their operations accordingly. The Cullingworth Committee recommended as long ago as 1969 that local authorities should keep records of the ethnic origin of applicants, and PEP found that a number of local authorities, while they may presently deny that they keep records of ethnic origin, do in fact do so in some form or other, so that problems of data collection may well be over-estimated. We shall be publishing our detailed

recommendations on record keeping and the monitoring of housing allocations in due course, but in the meantime we strongly urge the Department of the Environment to give a lead to local authorities on the question of ethnic record keeping and monitoring. It is only when local authorities have such information that they will be able to assess whether they are meeting their obligations under Section 71 of the 1976 Race Relations Act. More immediately it would also be helpful if local authorities conducted surveys of their allocations like that recently carried out by the GLC.

4. SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS

4.1. As the Green Paper states (para 12.01) "There are quite large numbers of people who may face special difficulties in getting suitable housing." Local authorities should be encouraged to make use of the provisions of Section 35 of the new Race Relations Act which enables them to make provision to meet the special needs of ethnic minorities and of Section 5 of the same Act which allows them to appoint a person of a particular racial group where "the holder of the job provides persons of that racial group with personal services promoting their welfare, and these services can most effectively be provided by a person of that racial group." Housing Associations too have an important part to play in meeting housing needs (see paragraph 8 below).

4.2. The special need categories which are of particular relevance to ethnic minorities are outlined below:

(a) **Lower income householders**

PEP found that the median gross weekly earnings of ethnic minority men was lower than those of white men (£36.70 compared with £40.20 in 1974). Policies designed to assist those in lower income groups will obviously assist the ethnic minorities and we welcome the continuation of both rent rebates and allowances. We would however again stress the importance of ensuring that ethnic minorities are aware of these schemes. We would also emphasise the increasing role that housing aid and advice centres might play in this respect. PEP research showed that whereas one would expect, in view of their economic position, a larger proportion of minority than of white tenants to be entitled to rent rebates and allowances, in fact twice as many minority tenants as white tenants do not know whether they are entitled to a rent rebate or allowance or think they are entitled to one but are not receiving it.

(b) **Homelessness**

We have already referred to the high incidence of ethnic minority families among the homeless being rehoused by local authorities. There are many reasons for this, e.g. racial discrimination in the private housing sector, ignorance of their rights to tenure, the lack of relatives nearby to turn to for help, and the additional stresses on family life within a strange environment. There is a need for provision to be made for homeless young people, particularly black youngsters, whose problems are compounded by alienation and a higher level of unemployment, and who are unlikely to benefit from the provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. We agree that assistance should be provided (para 12.58) to self-help projects to deal with these kinds of problems, but such schemes can often help only very limited numbers of people. There is also a need for a strategic long-term policy to provide housing for this group and for this local authorities could take direct responsibility. Some headteachers, for example, feel that since evidence of homelessness among young people, particularly black youngsters, often comes to the attention of schools in the first instance, some of the worst problems could be overcome if schools had access to hostel or other suitable accommodation.

(c) **One parent families**

The proportion of West Indian families with children who are one parent families is slightly higher than for the population as a whole, 13% (PEP estimate) compared with 10% (Finer estimate), the figure for Asians being only 1% (PEP). The suggestions in the Green Paper for helping one parent families, for example, with regard to council tenancy agreements and points schemes, will be relevant to West Indian as to all one parent families. Local authorities may in addition need to consider special provision for very young unsupported mothers.

(d) **Elderly people**

The 1971 census suggested that there were nearly 26,400 elderly people in Britain whose parents were born in the New Commonwealth. Because persons in this age group represent only about 3% of the total New Commonwealth population compared with about 20% in the general population their needs have often been overlooked. As a result of the increasing breakdown of traditional family

structure among ethnic minorities and the arrival of elderly Asian refugees, elderly people among the minorities, as among the indigenous population, may need day-care facilities and accommodation in residential homes and sheltered housing. Since they are less likely than younger members of ethnic minorities to have adapted to this country in terms of language, diet and other cultural factors, it is important that as far as possible they are not isolated from other members of their group and that some attempt is made to provide for their particular requirements.

(e) Refugees

The Commission believes that there should be contigency plans to deal with the possibility, however slight, of the arrival in this country of a large number of refugees such as occurred in the case of Ugandan Asians. This could be done at both local and national level.

4.3. The Commission welcomes the assurance given in the Green Paper that the Government will ensure that the special needs and problems faced by ethnic minorities will be "taken fully into account in the development of housing policies and programmes, in consultation with the new Commission for Racial Equality." We would once again stress the urgency with which such policies and programmes should be put into effect if patterns of disadvantage are not to become entrenched.

5. LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGIES

5.1. The Government consider (para 6.04) that local authorities must now develop effective local housing strategies to be carried out with the minimum of interference from Central Government. As suggested in the Green Paper, this will require authorities to assess the full range of both present and future housing requirements in their areas and to take account of the existing housing stock. The Department of the Environment should encourage or require local authorities in drawing up their strategies and housing investment programmes to specify what action they are taking to fulfil their duties under Section 71 of the 1976 Race Relations Act. We believe that local authorities with significant minority settlement should take into account the particular needs of ethnic minorities and the possible consequences for them.

5.2. We welcome the Government's plans to give priority to local authorities with severe problems associated with inner city areas. Since minority groups are disproportionately concentrated on poorer estates plans to renovate such estates will also be of particular benefit to them. We therefore thoroughly support the policy of improving "the worst first". We note that a Housing Consultative Council has been set up in England to consider all major issues of concern to local authorities and the Commission looks forward to discussing relevant matters with the H.C.C. and the Council of the Principality in Wales.

6. HOME OWNERSHIP

6.1. As mentioned above, 50% of West Indian households and 76% of Asian households are in owner occupied accommodation compared with 50% for the general population. Policies related to home ownership therefore have considerable significance for ethnic minorities.

Building Societies

6.2. The Commission agrees with the view of the Government (paras 7.46 and 7.47) that Building Societies, without risk to their investors' funds, ought to give more weight to social factors in their lending policies. The PEP survey found that 77% of minority owner occupiers lived in terraced houses compared with 28% of whites, that 47% of minority owner occupiers were in pre-1913 dwellings and 45% in 1914 - 1939 dwellings – the comparative figures for whites being 27% and 26% respectively. This over-representation of ethnic minorities in categories of housing on which Building Societies are less willing to lend obviously works to their disadvantage in obtaining house purchase finance. So too does their under-representation in professional and managerial grades and middle and higher income groups. The PEP survey found that only 43% of Asian and 51% of West Indian owner occupiers with mortgages financed their house purchase through Building Societies compared with 73% of whites. Much higher proportions of ethnic minorities with mortgages, 33% for Asians and 39% for West Indians, than of whites (13%) obtained finance through local authorities which adopt more liberal lending policies. The cuts in local authority mortgage lending are bound to have had a particularly disadvantageous effect on ethnic minorities, who may resort to other sources of finance for loans at high interest rates. As a consequence they may subsequently find themselves homeless having been dispossessed through being unable to afford the repayments.

6.3. Ethnic minorities may be disproportionately affected by so-called "red-lining" of certain districts by some Building Societies. These areas are usually in the inner cities where ethnic minorities are over-represented.

6.4. A relaxation in Building Society lending policies, including increased lending down market on older properties in inner city areas, would obviously benefit ethnic minorities to a considerable extent. Societies, and local authorities too, might also be encouraged to grant more joint mortgages since the PEP survey indicated that 24% of Asian households contain members of the extended family. The joint incomes would often be sufficient to pay a mortgage whereas that of the nuclear family might not. In recent research the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies in Birmingham has found that joint ownership is often an important stepping stone to owner occupation by the nuclear family. Although PEP found that joint ownership among ethnic minorities was, if anything, lower than among the population as a whole, this may be because the kind of joint mortgages they need are different from the normally accepted type for husband and wife.

Co-operation between Local Authorities and Building Societies

6.5. We also support the proposals put forward in the Green Paper (para 7.30) for greater co-operation between local authorities and Building Societies in terms of topping-up loans and of assurances about improvement or repair grants which are a prerequisite for, or a condition of, mortgage. We agree too that local authorities should keep Building Societies informed of local development plans and provide guarantees to Building Societies that older properties are acceptable security for loans. These measures should help to ensure increased lending on homes which are older or in a poor state of repair, help to reduce "red-lining" and assist in revitalizing older urban areas.

6.6. We note however that the Government expects it may take some years for the full potential of these proposed developments to be realised and we agree that, in the words of the Green Paper (para 7.33), "more needs to be done". We are concerned that the arrangements for support lending by Building Societies to potential borrowers nominated by local authorities have not had the effect of making available sufficient funds to those who would not normally meet the usual Building Society requirements. In urban areas the rejection rate by Building Societies of local authority nominations appears to be high. We consider that urgent action is needed to ensure adequate funds for house purchase by those in lower income groups wanting to buy cheaper, older, houses in inner city areas. Without this, further decline of such areas seems inevitable along with the associated social and community relations problems outlined already.

Increasing the supply of mortgage funds for down market lending

6.7. We would urge that what little money local authorities have to grant mortgages should be allocated to the categories referred to in the previous paragraph and that the funds made available to local authorities for this purpose be increased as soon as possible.

6.8. The Government says in the Green Paper (para 7.06) that while Building Societies must certainly satisfy themselves about the security of the funds invested with them they could, without risk, go further in supporting the objectives of the national housing policy and that they should do so. We fully agree with this.

Improvement and repair

6.9. We welcome the proposed change in emphasis in renovation policy (para 10.20) in aiming to bring more houses up to basic standards rather than fewer houses up to higher standards. This and the proposal (para 10.22) that local authorities should be more flexible in their approach to the giving of grants, for example on the expected life of the property, and the making of "repairs only" grants should encourage those in lower income groups who cannot afford extensive improvements to carry out at least basic repairs. We should also favour more flexibility in the application of the rateable value limits for eligibility to grants, particularly where properties are in housing action areas or are larger properties jointly owner occupied by more than one family. Grants for repairs to houses in multi-occupation and grants to private tenants to repair or improve their accommodation are also welcomed. All these provisions should help to some degree to offset the disadvantages of ethnic minorities, a higher percentage of whom live in shared dwellings and in houses in poor repair and with fewer amenities. Once again, the impact of these measures will depend on their communication to those in need, and particularly to Asians, many of whom do not speak English.

Estate Agents and house purchase arrangements

6.10 There is considerable evidence from the PEP study and some research carried out in Bristol of racial discrimination by estate agents, for example, in not informing ethnic minorities of certain properties which are for sale or directing them away from certain localities and towards others. We are pleased to note that

the Government's proposals to regulate estate agency include provision for the Director General of Fair Trading to take action against agents who discriminate, although clearly such provision must be carefully co-ordinated with our own law-enforcement functions. We would also welcome any proposals for simplifying house purchase arrangements which are generally even more difficult for ethnic minorities to comprehend and cope with than for the indigenous population.

7. THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

7.1. Overall the proportion of ethnic minorities in private rented accommodation is about the same as for the population as a whole although the breakdown according to age and socio-economic group varies. For example, 80% of West Indians in the 16-24 age range are in privately rented accommodation compared with only 42% of whites in this age range. There is known from PEP research and the experience of the Race Relations Board to be widespread racial discrimination by private landlords and accommodation agencies. This no doubt contributes to a considerable extent to the situation found by PEP that minority private tenants tend to be in poorer quality accommodation than white private tenants. Minority private tenants are likely to be particularly vulnerable since they are concentrated in the private furnished rented sector and probably less aware than white tenants of their rights with regard to tenancy agreements, rent books, and security of tenure. Housing aid and advice centres have an important role to play here in educating both minority tenants and landlords. There may also be a case for such centres acting as accommodation and lodgings bureaux. This ought to have the effect not only of increasing the amount of rented accommodation available to ethnic minorities but also encouraging them to use the centres and benefit from the other sevices available.

8. HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

8.1. Like the Government we should like to see a continuing growth of the activities of registered housing associations and their integration into local housing strategies. Housing associations have a particularly valuable role to play in catering for groups or categories of people not otherwise provided for, particularly those with special needs such as the single homeless, among whom young West Indians are disproportionately represented. Under Section 35 of the 1976 Race Relations Act, mentioned in paragraph 4.1. above, it would be permissible for a housing association to make provision to meet the special needs of persons of a particular racial group. We have been informed that certain minority groups feel that they are experiencing particular difficulties in gaining registration as housing associations and there may well be a need for at least better understanding between these groups and the Housing Corporation. In meeting special needs housing associations can often be more flexible than local authorities and we would particularly wish to encourage those projects where housing associations work in co-operation with local community groups. We would also agree with the Government's recommendation (para 9.26) that all but the smallest associations should publish the basis on which they allocate tenancies.

9. NEW TOWNS

9.1. The Green Paper mentions the criticisms made of New Towns that tenancies are allocated primarily to the young, skilled workers, leaving behind in the inner cities the old, unskilled and socially disadvantaged. The Commission is at present carrying out a study for the Department of the Environment on the movement of ethnic minorities to New and Expanding Towns. Surveys have been undertaken in five New and Expanding Towns and two workers have been employed in Islington and Brent. The preliminary findings of the two workers show that there is an almost complete lack of knowledge among ethnic minority families in inner city areas about the advantages that can be gained from moving to New and Expanding Towns. Of the few who are aware of those towns, most have an apprehensive or hostile attitude towards them, partly because of fear of the unknown, and partly because of the "white middle class image" of New Towns. Their publicity material reinforces this image and so too does the fact that in most local authorities the staff who deal with black families interested in moving out are nearly all white.

9.2. Yet New Towns can often offer the best available housing solution for families living in housing stress in inner city areas. Some ethnic minority families have of course moved, mainly through the direct nomination schemes which many London Boroughs now have with certain New Towns.

9.3. Ethnic minority families moving to New and Expanding Towns naturally look for support and companionship within their own community. The CRE will recommend that New Town Development Corporations should establish regular channels of communication with the main ethnic minority organisations in their towns, and that prospective movers or newcomers should be put in touch with their own community.

10. COMMUNICATION WITH ETHNIC MINORITIES ON HOUSING

10.1. As we have mentioned throughout this paper, there is a need not only to implement measures to improve the housing situation of those in most need but also to impart information about the nature of these measures and how to take advantage of them. In addition to the difficulties faced by the rest of the population in understanding the complex legal, financial and administrative procedures involved in all aspects of housing, ethnic minorities face special problems of understanding related to language and cultural differences.

10.2. They are less aware than the white population of the existence of local authority housing. Still less are they conversant with the types of housing available to them, and of the system for obtaining them. They are less likely therefore to improve their housing through the transfer system. There may also be communication difficulties with housing visitors, not just because of language, but because of misunderstandings in cultural terms in discussing the composition of the household and the choices available. They are likely to be unaware of improvement and repair grants and to experience difficulty in understanding how to obtain grants and the obligations under which they are given. Similar problems are likely to occur in understanding complicated clearance arrangements. Ethnic minorities may be unaware of their rights in the private rented sector and even have difficulty understanding the concepts of tenancy agreements, etc. As illustrated by the PEP survey, they also tend to be less aware of their eligibility for rent allowances and rebates. Even where there are housing aid and advice centres there may still be problems of communication. Communication difficulties also inhibit the involvement of Asians particularly in tenant and community associations, for example on local authority housing estates and in housing action areas.

10.3. We should like to see local authorities with ethnic minority settlement in their areas taking more steps to identify and to try to overcome problems of this kind. They should discuss with housing staff any communication problems they experience, and try to assess the use being made of various services by the minorities and where and with whom the main problems occur.

10.4. Documents such as allocation systems and tenancy agreements should be translated where appropriate and brief summaries of literature in Asian languages should be provided. Such information could be distributed door-to-door in areas of very high ethnic concentration, or through local Community Relations Councils, community centres and ethnic minority organisations. Use could also be made of the ethnic press, cinemas and special minority programmes on local radio and television.

10.5. Local authorities should consider the recruitment of staff with a knowledge of the appropriate cultural backgrounds and languages of the minorities in their areas either as interpreters or as housing staff for work with such minorities (see para 4.1. above). Where the demand is insufficient to justify full-time workers they could arrange for someone to be at housing aid or advice centres at a particular time each week to deal specifically with the problems of ethnic minorities. Local authorities can of course obtain funding for such posts under Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act. The training of existing housing staff in the cultural backgrounds of ethnic minorities may also help to avoid misunderstandings arising from cultural differences.

11. SUMMARY

11.1. We support many of the proposals contained in the Government's Green Paper – particularly where they are concerned with those in greatest housing need. However, as we have mentioned already, while we agree with the Government's contention that ethnic minorities will benefit from policies designed to help those in greatest housing need, we feel that the Government has failed to recognise the degree to which the implications for ethnic minorities should become a generally accepted dimension in the planning of national and local housing policy.

11.2. The Government states with regard to ethnic minorities (para 12.55) that "it is a fact that a higher proportion of households of New Commonwealth origin live in poor housing conditions, especially as regards overcrowding and lack of exclusive amenities;" also that "ethnic minorities have tended to receive less desirable local authority accommodation." There is more and more evidence about the ways in which local authorities' allocation procedures work to the disadvantage of ethnic minorities, and about the degree to which racial discrimination is or might be one of the factors involved.

11.3. There is a need which has long been recognised by our predecessors in the Race Relations Board and Community Relations Commission for local authority allocation procedures to be monitored so as to assess how they operate with regard to ethnic minorities, with a view to ensuring that they do not suffer

from any form of racial discrimination or from any other unjustified disadvantage. The keeping of ethnic records for this purpose was advocated by the Cullingworth Committee as long ago as 1969, and by the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration in 1971. Recent research has further highlighted the need for local authorities to monitor their allocation schemes. We are therefore dismayed that once again the Government has failed to give a clear lead in recommending local authorities to keep ethnic records and to use them in analysing the operation of their allocation procedures.

11.4. The lack of any commitment by the Department of the Environment to record keeping and monitoring is at odds with Section 71 of the 1976 Race Relations Act which, as stated already, lays a statutory duty on every local authority to carry out its functions with due regard to the need to eliminate racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. We strongly urge the Department of Environment to issue clear and positive guidelines to local authorities on record keeping and monitoring with the minimum of delay.

11.5. We look forward to the promised consultation with the Government in ensuring that "the problems faced by ethnic minorities are taken fully into account in the development of housing policies and programmes."

December 1977

CRE PUBLICATIONS

	Price
CONFERENCE REPORT: Strategy Statement and Speeches from the National Conference of CRCs at Leicester	75p
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN FROM MINORITY GROUPS: Reference Series No 1	30p
THE EDUCATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY CHILDREN	80p
IN SERVICE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS IN MULTI-RACIAL AREAS: An Evaluation of Current Practice	60p
A SECOND CHANCE: Further Education in Multi-Racial Areas	£1.35
MEETING THEIR NEEDS: An Account of Language Tuition Schemes for Ethnic Minority Women	80p
DON'T RUSH ME: The Comic-Strip, Sex Education and a Multi-Racial Society – by Sarah Curtis	35p
THE EMPLOYMENT OF NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING WORKERS: What Industry Must Do: Ref. Series No 2	50p
WORLD RELIGIONS: Aids for Teachers (3rd Edition)	£1.50
EAST COMES WEST (2nd Edition) by Mrs Peggy Holroyde and others. A Background to three Asian faiths – Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism	35p
HOME TUTOR KITS (Reprint)	75p
UNEMPLOYMENT & HOMELESSNESS: A Report: Reference Series No 3 (HMSO)	£1.00
THE EMPLOYMENT OF BLACK PEOPLE IN A LONDON BOROUGH	25p
HOUSING IN MULTI-RACIAL AREAS: A Report of a Working Party of Housing Directors	60p
HOUSING CHOICE AND ETHNIC CONCENTRATION: An Attitude Study	90p
URBAN DEPRIVATION, RACIAL INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL POLICY: A Report: Reference Series No 13 (HMSO)	£1.75
FOSTERING BLACK CHILDREN: Reference Series No 6	30p
WHO MINDS?: A Study of Working Mothers and Childminding in Ethnic Minority Communities	75p
ASPECTS OF MENTAL HEALTH IN A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY: Reference Series No 10	60p
CARING FOR UNDER-FIVES IN A MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY	60p
ONE YEAR ON: A Report on the Resettlement of the Refugees from Uganda in Britain: Ref. Series No 4	75p
REFUGE OR HOME?: A Policy Statement on the Resettlement of Refugees: Reference Series No 7	75p
SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS....: A Report on Race Relations Attitudes: Reference Series No 8	45p
PARTICIPATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE GENERAL ELECTION, October 1974	45p
BETWEEN TWO CULTURES: A Study in Relationship between Generations in the Asian Community in Britain: Reference Series No 12	£1.00
THE ARTS BRITAIN IGNORES: The Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain – by Naseem Khan	£1.50
DOCTORS FROM OVERSEAS: A Case for Consultation: Reference Series No 9	50p
MUSLIM BURIALS: A Policy Paper (Reprint)	25p
AS THEY SEE IT: A Race Relations Study of Three Areas From a Black View-point – by Lionel Morrison: Reference Series No 11	£1.25
SEEN BUT NOT SERVED: Black Youth & the Youth Service	50p
RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE: Reference Series No 5	60p
CITIZENSHIP OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND COLONIES: What Registration Means to You (Rev. Ed.)	50p
NO PROBLEMS HERE?: Menagement and Multi-Racial Workforce including a Guide to the Race Relations Act, 1976 (IPM & CRE)	£1.50

PERIODICALS

NEW COMMUNITY – Quarterly: £1.50 per copy.	Annual Subscription:	Individuals	£5.00
		Institutions	£7.00
NEW EQUALS – Bi-monthly			Free

FREE BOOKLETS AND LEAFLETS

STRATEGY STATEMENT: A Programme for Action

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN BRITAIN: Statistical Data (7th Edition)

RACE RELATIONS IN BRITAIN: A Select Bibliography with Emphasis on Ethnic Minorities (6th Edition)

FILM CATALOGUE: Community and Race Relations (2nd Edition)